



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 7, 2007

TO: Nicole Cafarella
Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs
Office of Management and Budget

THROUGH: James Hyler
Regulatory Information Management Services

FROM: Kerri L. Briggs
Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
U.S. Department of Education

SUBJECT: Emergency Clearance of Title I School Improvement Grants Program Application Package

The Department of Education's (ED) Office of Elementary and Secondary Education requests that the application package for the Title I School Improvement Grants program be cleared on an emergency basis. Attached for your review is OMB Form 83-I and a supporting narrative for School Improvement Grants application. We have completed the application package and are currently finalizing several frequently asked questions that will be added to the application package.

School Improvement Grants is a formula program authorized in section 1003(g) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Funded for the first time in fiscal year (FY) 2007 at \$125 million, the program makes financial assistance available to State educational agencies (SEAs) to help local educational agencies (LEAs) address the needs of schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring in order to improve student achievement. To receive a School Improvement Grant, section 1003(g)(4) requires each SEA to submit an application to ED that outlines how it will use funds to assist State and local school improvement efforts. In its application the SEA must also describe, when distributing funds to LEAs, how it will give priority to LEAs that demonstrate (1) the greatest need for School Improvement funding and (2) the strongest commitment to providing resources needed to help the lowest-achieving schools successfully implement their improvement plans. These funds are critical to State and local implementation of effective LEA and school improvement strategies that help meet the academic proficiency goals of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and to focusing greater resources on the growing number of schools identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring under NCLB.

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ED is requesting emergency clearance of the School Improvement Grants application package in order to put this program into operation for the 2007-08 school year. Congress did not appropriate funds for School Improvement Grants until February 15, 2007 with passage of the FY 2007 Final Continuing Resolution (PL 110-5). As a result, ED did not know until then that funds would be available for this purpose. Consequently, ED could not begin developing an application package until funds became available. (Earlier versions of the FY 2007 continuing resolutions included no funding for School Improvement Grants.) Since February 15, ED has consulted with interested groups, both externally and internally, to develop an application package that meets the intent and purposes of section 1003(g) so that ED can award grants to States as soon as possible FY 2007 School Improvement Grant funds become available.

It is extremely important for SEAs and LEAs to access these funds as soon as possible in order to implement the requirements of section 1116 of ESEA for schools that have been identified for improvement, corrective action, or restructuring. The \$125 million made available in FY 2007 under section 1003(g) for this purpose will enable States to carry out needed school improvement activities that they would not otherwise be able to conduct. An emergency clearance is needed in order to allow States to begin conducting critical school improvement activities as soon as possible.

We expect that this emergency clearance of the application package would be needed only for awarding FY 2007 grant awards. Next year, the burden associated with the emergency application package for the School Improvement Grants program would be folded in with the consolidated State plan package that is scheduled for renewal in 2008.

Thank you for your assistance. If you have questions, please contact Susan Wilhelm at (202) 260-0984, or at Susan.Wilhelm@ed.gov.